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ABSTRACT

This paper explores contemporary pedagogical images and considers various mechanisms by which educational researchers might investigate their complex meanings. More specifically, it works to: (1) define image; (2) contextualize the construction (re)production, maintenance, manipulation, and consequences of pedagogical images; (3) suggest theoretical frameworks with which pedagogical images might be investigated (including those offered by Bakhtin, Barthes, Boorstin, and McLuhan); (4) apply those frameworks to particular examples of pedagogical image (including a cartoon, a set of newspaper headlines, and a film); and (5) discuss various possible meanings and areas of significance with respect to the pursuit of pedagogical images. The paper concludes by indicating the need for further research and by reminding scholars of the contemporary importance of (and access to) popular culture and technology, as well as seeing and being seen. (Contains 69 references.) (SM)

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Pursuing Image: Making Sense of Popular Pedagogical Representations

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Abstract

In this paper, the author explores contemporary pedagogical images and considers various mechanisms by which educational researchers might investigate their complex meanings. More specifically, he works to: (1) define image; (2) contextualize the construction, (re)production, maintenance, manipulation, and consequences of pedagogical images; (3) suggest theoretical frameworks with which pedagogical images might be investigated (including those offered by Bakhtin, Barthes, Boorstin, and McLuhan); (4) apply these frameworks to particular examples of pedagogical image (including a cartoon, a set of newspaper headlines, and a film); and (5) discusses various possible meanings and areas of significance with respect to the pursuit of pedagogical images. He concludes by indicating the need for further research and by reminding scholars of the contemporary importance of (and access to) popular culture and technology, as well as of seeing and being seen.

Pursuing Image: Making Sense of Popular Pedagogical Representations[1]

There is something soul-destroying about the manufacture of illusions….

—Shulevitz (2001, p. 31)

The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.

—John Berger (cited in Goodheart, 2000, p. A27)

Without a doubt our epoch prefers the image to the real thing, the copy to the original, the representation to the reality, appearance to being. What is sacred for it is only illusion. More than that, the sacred grows in its eyes to the extent that truth diminishes and illusion increases, to such an extent that the peak of illusion is for it the peak of the sacred.

—Fuerbach (cited in *Spectacular Times*, n.d.)

No Child Left Behind

—President George W. Bush (2001), title of Presidential/Department of Education Report

1994-1996: 79.3%

1997-1999: 79.2%

—National Center for Education Statistics (2001), High School Completion Rates for Texas Students from 1994 to 1999, the period during which President George W. Bush was Governor of Texas

Over the past several years, *popular cultural* and *media-produced images* of various aspects of schooling have become increasingly commonplace and, arguably, important relative to understanding contemporary education. Hollywood films, for example, that address (to varying degrees of validity and reliability) key elements of teaching and learning proliferated during the 1980s and early 1990s and even garnered critical praise and some of the movie establishment's highest honors (e.g., *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* [Heckerling & Crowe, 1982], *Mr. Holland's Opus* [Herek, 1995], *Stand and Deliver* [Menéndez, 1987], *Dangerous Minds* [Smith, 1995], and *Dead Poets' Society* [Weir, 1989], among many others). Although such cinematic portrayals have a long history (e.g., *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* [Wood, 1939]; *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* [Neame, 1969]; *Blackboard Jungle* [Brooks, 1955]; *To Sir With Love* [Clavell, 1967]), today it seems especially clear that producing films about teachers and/or teaching—that is, producing *images*—can be highly lucrative, enticing, and popular. (Arguably, there has also been a certain [perhaps mutual] movie-TV "spillover effect" as evidenced by recent TV attempts to address schools and schooling—e.g., *Boston Common*, the short-lived *Dangerous Minds*—a state of affairs with its own peculiar history, e.g., *Room 222*; *Welcome Back, Kotter*, etc.) Likewise, news media accounts portrayals—for example, of "school failure" and/or "ineffectiveness" based upon the (re)presentation of standardized test scores—whether indicative or not of any holistic and complex classroom "realities"—have multiplied and in many ways grown increasingly problematic (as political soundbites such as "no child left behind" and media images of school violence have as well).

What both cinematic and news media depictions of education, schooling, and teaching signal are the creation, propagation, reproduction, and consequences of "images." They

simultaneous *contribute to* and *reflect the influence of* the popular (and potentially dominating) *construction* of powerful pedagogical conceptions, worldviews, and/or perspectives.

Of course such images—their causes *and* consequences—are not *inherently* negative or evil (nor, of course, are they inherently positive or good). In fact, on some level, everyone with even the slightest awareness of schooling invents and makes use of them for a range of shifting purposes. We do so, for instance (and among other similar mechanisms), in reciprocal and fluid relationships not only with popular culture and the media, but also with such human characteristics as memory (e.g., "back when I was in school…") and through the very contingencies of everyday lived experiences (as parents, students, educators, etc.). They do, however, become troubling if and when they (a) hyper-privilege the interests and statuses of particular individuals, groups, and/or ideologies; (b) promote and/or work to (re)produce specific and power-laden injustices, inequalities, or modes of oppression; and (c) result in the perpetuation of anti-democratic modes of understanding, practice, and/or policymaking. The corporate-conglomerate environment responsible for the production of films and the dissemination of news and information encourages if not demands a critical attitude in response.

The starting point for this work is fourfold. First, echoing broadly constructivist orientations, I accept that we *all* (assuming at least some knowledge of public schooling) create unique pedagogical images as we seek to make sense of our lives vis-à-vis multiple, individual, various, shifting, and complex interactions among popular cultural/media representations, experiences, memories, beliefs, philosophies, public issues, and formal educational policies and practices. Second, I assume that these images are at the same time both contextually positive *and* negative. Third, I suggest that they not only contribute to how we ascribe meaning to teaching and schooling, but that they are, in turn, *ultimately and reproductively exemplified*—

sustained—in the works of those individuals and institutions responsible for and identified with their production and their socio-political and socio-economic effects. And fourth, I understand that these images, as they influence how we comprehend schooling, subsequently (and thus) affect (perhaps) such critical conditions as (1) how teachers teach and actualize curriculum; (2) how parents and community members view and conceive of education; (3) how students make sense of their learning experiences; and (4) how policymakers and "educational leaders" both manufacture and evaluate policy.

Given the possible significance(s) of popular cultural/media-(re)presented pedagogical images, I first and fundamentally raise and pursue the following question: How might we understand the creation, maintenance, reproduction, and consequences of cultural/media produced and propagated pedagogical images (especially in terms of representations of and struggles over [in]effective teaching, appropriate content, instructional purpose, educational policy, and the relationships between both teachers and students and schools and society)? Accordingly, in terms of schooling, how do such images influence and reflect what we know and how we know it?

More specifically, I aim to:

- Define *image*
- Explore the potential importance of *pedagogical* images as indicated in, for example, the popular cinema and the various news media outlets
- Investigate and illustrate the relevance of several models by which pedagogical images might be interpreted and/or critically interrogated

- Consider the plausible and practical implications of this inquiry for educational practice, policymaking, and, especially, theoretical and empirical scholarship.

My overall aim is to explore ways in which educational researchers can work to understand, and to help others understand, the creation, meaning, and consequences of popular pedagogical images.

Defining Image

There are, of course, many ways of defining the term "image," both as a noun—*an* image—and a verb—*to* image. According to the Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary *an* image is:

1. a reproduction or imitation of the form of a person or thing; especially: an imitation in solid form: STATUE
2. a: the optical counterpart of an object produced by an optical device (as a lens or mirror) or an electronic device

   b: a likeness of an object produced on a photographic material
3. a: exact likeness: SEMBLANCE (God created man in his own [image] —Gen 1:27 [RSV])

   b: a person strikingly like another person (she is the [image] of her mother)
4. a: a tangible or visible representation: INCARNATION (the [image] of filial devotion)

   b: archaic: an illusory form: APPARITION
5. a: (1): a mental picture of something not actually present: IMPRESSION

(2): a mental conception held in common by members of a group and symbolic of a basic attitude and orientation (a disorderly courtroom can seriously tarnish a community's [image] of justice —Herbert Brownell)

b: IDEA, CONCEPT

6. a vivid or graphic representation or description
7. FIGURE OF SPEECH
8. a popular conception (as of a person, institution, or nation) projected esp. through the mass media (promoting a corporate [image] of brotherly love and concern —R. C. Buck)
9. a set of values given by a mathematical function (as a homomorphism) that corresponds to a particular subset of the domain

And according to *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* an image is "a representation of the external form of a person or thing in sculpture, painting, etc." It is, moreover,

- a visible impression obtained by a camera, telescope, microscope, or other device, or displayed on a video screen.
- an optical appearance or counterpart produced by light or other radiation from an object reflected in a mirror or refracted through a lens
- MATHEMATICS a point or set formed by mapping from another point or set
- a mental representation or idea: *he had an image of Uncle Walter throwing his crutches away.*
- a simile or metaphor: *he uses the image of a hole to describe emotional emptiness.*

- the general impression that a person, organization, or product presents to the public: *she strives to project an image of youth.*
- [in SING.] a person or thing that closely resembles another: *he's* ***the image of*** *his father.*
- [in SING.] semblance or likeness: made **in the image of** God.
- (in biblical use) an idol.

Both sources trace the origins of "image" through Middle English and Old French and relate "image" to the Latin *imago* or *imitari* meaning "to imitate." The Merriam Webster Thesaurus includes the following as synonyms, related words, and/or idioms:

- double
- picture
- portrait
- ringer
- simulacrum
- spit
- spitting image
- counterpart
- equal
- equivalent
- match
- chip off the old block

- dead ringer
- speaking likeness
- spit and image
- IDEA
- apprehension
- conceit
- concept
- conception
- impression
- intellection
- notion
- perception
- thought[2]

In my own previous work (Vinson, in press), I have defined *image* as:

> a *picture* or *representation* of some thing, event, or situation that exists materially and/or spiritually in reality; it is [further] that which, regardless of its creator's objectives, *does not*—[and] *cannot—reflect, depict, or indicate accurately, precisely, and/or completely any ultimate reality* vis-à-vis its *intended* "subject-object."

Taken together, these definitions suggest a number of plausible patterns or themes, as well as an array of theoretical classification schemes (i.e., ways to address the relatively large

number of meanings formally attributable to the term image). For the purposes of this paper, perhaps one reasonable set of distinctions can be drawn according to the complex interplay among "intent," "accuracy," and "understanding."

Regarding *intent*, and considering the various definitions and synonyms listed above, clearly some approaches to image aim to present an *exact replica*, that is to capture perfectly the essence if not entirety of some thing, object, person, idea, or event (etc.). Here, the "perfect" image would be either a literal duplicate or a reproduction entirely indistinguishable from the original. The image itself would signify or even "mean," then, precisely what was "meant" by the thing itself. In effect, the image would *be* the original. Metaphorically, think *photocopy* or, perhaps, still life *photography*, if and when the goal is to "capture" or "mirror" something absolutely and precisely, and when the *ideal* image is one that approximates "nature" as closely and accurately as possible (see, e.g., "dead ringer," above).

On the other hand, some images (and their producers) seek a representation that *intentionally* "distorts" a given target or focal point. In these instances, interpretation and subjectivity outweigh any effort at "genuine" replication. Often such images strive for some larger, thematic or aesthetic "message," such as, for instance, purposefully making "reality" appear either better or worse than it is. In some cases, a "negative" image is presented so that its article seems relatively good, while in others a "positive" image allows some object reality to appear relatively bad (see, e.g., "conceit" or "the general impression…" above), most notably, perhaps, in terms of whole-part relationships.

A second characteristic involves *accuracy* and the degree to which some image attempts to be faithful to its target and/or the extent to which its claimed or supposed "accuracy" is *selective* or in some way "representative." Take, for example, a newspaper photograph of a fight

between two high school boys under the headline "school violence increasing." Well? First, consider the selectivity of the image. Of the near infinite number of photographic possibilities inherent in any given school setting, this exemplifies but one. School violence may or may not be increasing, but in the context of that particular photograph we know (and *can* know) very little. Did the photographer select that particular fight to capture out of the many simultaneously occurring? Was in every other concurring circumstance the school a paragon of placidness and calm? Does the photograph represent an everyday happening, or was this the first such fight in several years? Is the headline an overgeneralization? Is the given setting a microcosm of some larger one? In many ways the ultimate meanings of such images depend on the unique experiences, knowledges, cultures, ideologies, environments, and so on of the individual image-producer and the members of his or her variously positioned audience(s).

Thus, the variety of *understandings* of the image-producer and those who experience the image are significant if not vital. Does the image-producer understand the image to be accurate? Is this understanding apparent in the image itself? How? What of the audience members? What, ultimately, do both groups thing it means? The character of these understandings affects fundamentally whether perspectives or viewpoints are reinforced and reproduced, and whether images are accepted as "true" or "false" (e.g., in the example, whether or not one "buys" that school violence indeed is increasing). Such understandings, then, cannot easily be dismissed, nor can their interpretive importance be ignored. They must, however, be approached via the various contextual settings within which images themselves are formed and construed.

Contextualizing Pedagogical Images

Any attempt to study pedagogical images must take seriously the various contexts within which they are created and interpreted and within which their myriad effects are felt. These

range from the almost absurd, for example what Frank Rich (2000) calls the "mediathon"—celebrity simply by virtue of being covered by the media *ad nauseam* (e.g., Monica Lewinsky, *Survivor* contestants, etc.)—to the somewhat frightening, for example the growing technological and fame-based threat to privacy (e.g., Rothstein, 2000; Schwartz, 2001). Simply, the pursuit of some abstract "image" in isolation makes little sense and offers little knowledge given the variety of unique and shifting societal factors that influence its construction and consequences. Although potentially an enormous number, I have chosen here to highlight briefly three that I think are particularly important vis-à-vis comprehending the contemporary educational (and social, cultural, political, economic, etc.) scene: (1) technological change and media saturation; (2) the status of education as a public issue; and (3) the movement toward standards-based educational reform (SBER). In effect, each of these contextualizing circumstances serves to (1) frame the invention, use, and possible repercussions of pedagogical images; (2) provide meaning relative to their contested and multiply construed layers of significance; and (3) suggest insights into their underlying purposes, mechanisms, modes of disciplinarity, and techniques of sustenance and (re)production. I conclude this section by addressing the organic importance of these several unique yet connected settings and by considering the relevance of a range of complementary and interpretive contingencies.

Technological Change and Media Saturation

A number of forces have contributed to the changing situation of technology in the United States and, arguably, the rest of the world. These include principally the development and expansion of the Internet (and its potential mediation of the continuous distribution of audiovisual images—e.g., through "Webcams" [see, e.g., "Deconstruct This," 2000), the advent of 24 hour per day/7 day per week television (broadcast, cable, satellite, cyber, etc.), politico-

economic "globalization" (e.g., international, state-supported corporate conglomerates and their necessary telecommunications innovations), and the attendant interest in both "seeing" and "being seen" (e.g., the growing popularity for both participants and spectators of "reality" TV). In sum, what these evolving technologies make possible is both the proliferation and fluidity of images, as well as the expanded access of groups and individuals to their creation, distribution, manipulation, and consumption. They constitute the recently acquired, absurdist and circular, capability, grounded in absolute media saturation or "hyperreality" (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997), of everybody watching everybody all the time (and recording and rewatching and so on; e.g., Vinson & Ross, 2001).

The Status of Education as a Public Issue

During the 1980 presidential election campaign, Republican Ronald Reagan ran on a platform that included a plank dedicated to the elimination of the federal Department of Education. Echoing the longstanding conservative (and more broadly American) view that education was a local concern, he and his party sought through the notion of a "new federalism" to "return" the control of schools to states, school districts, and communities, disavowing, in essence, nearly any educational role for the national government. Nonetheless, he did commit to a school-based responsibility for promoting the international financial interests of corporations and the "preservation" or "restoration" of "traditional American" values (e.g., see the National Commission on Excellence in Education's [1983] *A Nation at Risk* as well as selected works by Reagan's Secretary of Education William Bennett [e.g., 1988, 1994]). Reagan's "solution" to the "problem" of public schooling was, in fact, to promote *private* schooling through and consistent with (1) the employment of choice and voucher plans; (2) the promotion of the religious agenda of the far right; (3) the attempted and hegemonic homogenization of difference

and diversity; and (4) the conflation of the interests of children and education with those of the wealthy, powerful, and politically well-connected.

Although, arguably, the conservative agenda still rules under current President Bush (an agenda that thrived under his immediate predecessors the first President Bush and the Democratic President Clinton), clearly a shift has occurred in the degree to which public education exists as a significant *national* public issue. Bush has made clear his intention to prioritize education—granting that many educators disagree with his *specific* priorities—by including it among his first proposals to Congress and by referring repeatedly to it in his earliest speeches as Chief Executive. Although he still claims a commitment to local control, he has promised to increase federal educational spending and to place all public schools under an intensive (and, ultimately, misguided) regime of standardized testing and accountability. His Administration's recent report, "No Child Left Behind," further propelled his educational policymaking into the forefront of the media spotlight.[3]

Bush's approach both reflects and is reflected by a growing concern among voters that education is the US's number one national domestic policy issue, one that led Bush and his Democratic opponent Vice President Albert Gore to speak to it not only in their Presidential debates but also at numerous campaign events, in interviews, and at political meetings and rallies. As recent Gallup Polls (Jones, 2001) indicate, and as politicians certainly know, more Americans see "improving education" as a "top" priority than they do such hot-button issues as economic prosperity, improving military security, strengthening Social Security, reforming campaign finance, and cutting taxes. *Perhaps* surprisingly this public commitment cuts broadly across ideological and philosophical lines (i.e., "conservative," "moderate," and "liberal").[4] Within this milieu, this public "interest" or "pressure," educational and policy "leaders" must at

least *appear* to be meeting the needs or tackling the problems of public education. Through the media, to which politicians have almost unlimited access, they can then work to propagate perspectives grounded in easily abstracted and "spinnable" terms, including test scores, slogans, and photo-ops, thereby enabling for themselves the appropriation of the name "public education supporter."

The Move Toward SBER

A third major context involves the present movement toward SBER and its associated tendency in favor of high-stakes standardized testing and accountability. So great is its status that its advocates represent no less than a near totalizing, across-the-board consensus (if not, in fact, a "cult"; e.g., Vinson, in press). It consists of a veritable alliance, a coalition that includes both liberals and conservatives and encompasses groups and individuals embodying an array of educational and political perspectives and locations, for example government, schools, teachers' unions, businesses, professional organizations, and academe (e.g., Vinson, 1999; Vinson & Ross, in press). Although often portrayed within and against the current debate over standardized testing (e.g., Kohn, 1999, 2000; McNeil, 2000; Ohanian, 1999), it in reality comprises the larger theoretical and philosophical frameworks surrounding the very aims and methodologies of public schooling. Its fundamental power rests on the extent to which it has brought together advocates of traditionally opposing sides of the fence so that, for instance, perceived "liberals" (e.g., Nash, Crabtree, & Dunn, 1997) as well as perceived "conservatives" (e.g., Finn & Petrilli, 2000; Ravitch, 1995, 2000) agree on its essential correctness. Most simply, proponents of SBER argue that:

- Standards are necessary for productive school reform;
- Today's students do not "know enough" (however know enough is defined);
- Curriculum and assessment standards can lead to higher achievement
- National and/or state and local standards are crucial vis-à-vis global competition;
- There should be federal "leadership" but local "control"; and
- Standards promote equality of opportunity. (see Vinson, 1999; Vinson & Ross, in press)

This move toward SBER dictates a transparent representation of success or failure, one discernible via "hard" measures such as quantitatively derived "school report cards," standardized-test scores, and pass-fail rates. Increasingly, this turn implies the need to broadcast and/or market schools based on the "bottom-line" numbers. In that it is in the best interests of politicians and educational managers to depict public schools in purposeful ways and subsequently to act upon these depictions appropriately—as well as to maintain control over education, lest it be wrested away from them by teachers, parents, students, and community members—the power and utility of associated images (and the recognition of such) has expanded. Those who wish to promote privatization, for example, often use test scores (with all their incumbent shortcomings) to promulgate the perception that public schools are failing (and that, therefore, we should give parents a "choice"). Advocates of public schooling use them as a lever to reduce class size, to appropriate greater funding, and to focus on existing and structural social and pedagogical inequalities and injustices. Since the economically and politically powerful frequently support their own interests at the expense of those of the majority, and in

light of their connections to the media and their relationships with corporate and policymaking elites, needless to say in the contested realm of images they tend overwhelmingly to win out.

Interpretive Reflections

In sum, these contextual considerations illuminate a number of factors relevant to contemporary educational images. First, they expose and elucidate the ease with which such images now can be created, manipulated, distributed, and consumed—for instance, via the availability and power of innovative "virtual" and "on-line" technology. Moreover, they explain, in part, the perceived imperative within the educational-political-media leadership community to utilize and control (and even "spin") pedagogical images (i.e., in response to a growing concern among voters/citizens, parents, and politicians about the need for an expanded federal role in public schooling). Lastly, within the movement toward high-stakes testing, accountability, and SBER, they suggest a mechanism, the media-reported test score, by which the complexities of classroom life can be "transformed" into something readily *imaginable and reproducible*, the teaching-learning equivalent of a snapshot, that can serve to "represent" simply (and however falsely) the dynamic realities of education.

Scholars today must also consider the potential importance of mainstream film and television depictions. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s numbers were high, in terms not only of the quantity of films actually produced, but also in terms of box office receipts, audience, and awards. It is reasonable to presume that these efforts might have had at least some influence on the way individuals and groups (mis)understand teaching and learning, perhaps especially with respect to instructional (in)effectiveness and the virtues of certain "ideals."

Understanding these contexts demands as well engaging in and interrogating contemporary discourses of reality-image relationships, not only via the traditionalist

frameworks of, say, ontology, metaphysics, and aesthetics, but also in light of such evolving areas of inquiry as postmodernism/poststructuralism, multiculturalism/diversity, feminist/gender studies, and critical (education) theory(ies) (e.g., through the insights offered by media, film, and cultural studies [see below]). Such pursuits suggest challenging any essentialist or foundationalist notions of some singularly true (or "real") *reality* and, moreover, pose a threat to any Platonic-type orientation grounded in the assumed inferiority of the *observed-as-image* to some ideal and transcendent (or spiritual) *reality*. What ultimately must be confronted is the inexact yet diverse and mutual *set* of image-reality relationships and the complex processes that help privilege some constructions (i.e., some images, realities, and experiences) over others. At issue is the relative value of multiplicity—not only of images, but of both the contested reality(ies) of experience(s) and the contested experience(s) of reality(ies).

Theoretical Frameworks

Pedagogical images can be explored according to an array of theoretical frameworks. Recent post-disciplinary scholarship provides a few of the broader and potentially most useful perspectives, including those defined as "media studies" (e.g., Luhmann, 1996/2000; Sardar & Van Loon, 2000), "cultural studies" (e.g., Storey, 1994, 1996, 1998), and "film studies" (e.g., Hill & Gibson, 2000; Nelmes, 1999). In fact, educators have already taken up many of the challenges posed by such orientations and have made significant contributions to educational theory as well as to understanding the importance of representation. Recent works by scholars such as Giroux (1994; Giroux & [with] Shannon, 1997), McLaren (McLaren, Hammer, Sholle, & Reilly, 1995), Steinberg and Kincheloe (e.g., 1997), and Hytten (1999a, 1999b) are indicative of the directions these approaches have taken. For the purposes of this paper (and given space limitations), I have chosen to focus on four "classical" theorists who have written specifically

about the concept of image and its meanings. Their efforts, I think, can help educational researchers and theorists (if not also practitioners) make sense of the production, use, diffusion, interpretation, and effects of various pedagogical images. Namely, I include here the visions of Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Daniel Boorstin, and Marshall McLuhan.

Bakhtin: The Chronotope

For Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), understanding image involves exploring the processes by which a given imaginary work (or category or genre of work) succeeds in "assimilating" or "appropriating" various and "isolated aspects of time and space" (p. 84), especially vis-à-vis their fundamental and "intrinsic[] interconnectedness" (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 367). More directly, it requires an analysis grounded in his conceptualization of "chronotope."

> We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature [or other artistic works[6]]. This term (space-time) is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes, we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely). What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84)

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the

> movements of time, plot and history. *This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope* [italics added]. (p. 84)
>
> *The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man [*sic*] is always intrinsically chronotopic* [italics added]. (p. 85)

As Morson and Emerson (1990) no doubt rightly suggest, chronotope remains a difficult concept to define. But as they approach it, it first indicates "a way of understanding experience; [or] a specific form-shaping ideology for understanding the nature of events and actions" (p. 367) as they are (and must be) produced within particular and immediate contexts. These contexts "are shaped fundamentally by the kind of time and space that operate within them" (p. 367). It is here, according to Morson and Emerson, that Bakhtin makes his "crucial point…that time and space vary in *qualities*; different social activities and representations of those activities presume different kinds of time and space. Time and space are therefore not just neutral 'mathematical' abstractions" (p. 367).

Drawing on Bakhtin's own reference to Einstein, Morson and Emerson (1990) argue that a comparison of chronotopic space-time with the theory of relativity illuminates and helps clarify Bakhtin's approach in at least five essential ways:

1. In the chronotope, as in Einsteinian physics, time and space are not separate but are rather "intrinsically interconnected"; each chronotope specifies a *"fused"* sense of time and space;

2. The very formulation of Einstein's theory, as Bakhtin understands it, demonstrates that there are a *variety* of senses of time and space available;
3. Different aspects or orders of the universe cannot be supposed to operate with the same chronotope....[because, for example] different social activities are also defined by various kinds of fused time and space...;
4. It follows from the variety and multiplicity of chronotopes that they may change over time in response to current needs; they are in fact, and in potential, historical; [and]
5. Chronotopes are not so much visibly *present* in activity as they are the *ground* for activity. (pp. 367-367)

For Morson and Emerson (1990), a specific and "well-developed" chronotope offers answers to a number of questions implied by the more general concept of chronotope. These include those related to the association between action and context, the "replaceability" of some particular space, the ordering or directioning of time (e.g., is time reversible?), the mutual dependence of time-space and context, and the characterization (fluid, fixed, etc.) of human identity, character, and image (among many others).[7]

With respect to image, as Clark and Holquist (1984) note, Bakhtin's chronotope presents "a way not to take leave of reality...[but] precisely the opposite, a concept for engaging reality" (p. 278). For

> [o]ver the centuries people have organized the world of their immediate experience into a number of different world pictures. The fundamental categories for creating these images are time and space....Bakhtin...insists on the inseparability of these categories....[and]

> that at different times, differing combinations of space and time have been used to model exterior reality. (p. 278)

For the purposes of this paper, Bakhtin's chronotope provides one mechanism by which to interrogate, critique, and investigate contemporary pedagogical images. More precisely, it offers *a* means by which to explore image and reality via the inseparability and utility of time and space, and how "our particular totally integrated sense of space and time shapes our sense of reality….[as] we…engage[] in the activity of *re*-presenting the signals we get from our exterior environment, shaping those signals into a pattern…" (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 279). What "sense of space and time" are indicated via an image? How might an audience's understanding of space and time interact with that of an image/image producer as both work to re-present some sense of some reality (and/or some experience and/or some activity)?

Barthes: The Rhetoric of the Image

> According to an ancient etymology, the word *image* should be linked to the root *imitari*. Thus we find ourselves immediately at the heart of the most important problem facing the semiology of images: can analogical representation (the 'copy') produce true systems of signs and not merely simple agglutinations of symbols?
>
> general opinion…has a vague conception of the image as an area of resistance to meaning—this in the name of a certain mythical idea of Life: the image is re-presentation, which is to say ultimately resurrection, and, as we know, the intelligible is

> reputed antipathetic to lived experience. Thus…the image is felt to be weak in respect to meaning. (Barthes, 1977, p. 32)

As Barthes (1977) understands things, images do, nonetheless, (explicitly or implicitly) express messages—intentionally or unintentionally—and, thus, do signify something—that is, present some meaning, even if rudimentary in comparison to other symbol/signification systems such as formal (symbolic) language. He takes on *image* according to three principal questions:

- How does meaning get into the image?
- Where does it end? And
- [If] it ends, what is there *beyond*? (p. 32)

By "submitting the image to a spectral analysis of the messages it may contain" (pp. 32-33), he suggests that answers to these questions, as well as the structure of meaning itself, might emerge.

According to Barthes, all images offer, in their most fundamental distinction, a *linguistic*—or "textual"—and a *symbolic*—or "iconic"—*message*. The linguistic message (which is both denotational and connotational) can be presented, for instance, "as [or in the form of a] title, caption, accompanying press article, film dialogue, comic strip balloon [etc.]" (p. 38). It serves two characteristic purposes: (1) "anchorage" and (2) "relay." *Anchorage* works to help the viewer "choose *the correct level of perception*, [and] permits [him or her] to focus not simply [his or her] gaze but also [his or her] understanding" (p. 39). It functions to "guide" both "identification" (i.e., What *is* it?) and "interpretation" (i.e., What does it *mean*?), ultimately seeking to inhibit "the [possible] connoted meanings from proliferating" (p. 39) and/or drifting

off. The *relay* function of the linguistic message serves to complement the symbolic message, extending, advancing, and/or completing it (e.g., as a film's dialogue does via its pictures—it helps "tell the story").

The symbolic message actually encompasses two components—a denoted message or image and a connoted message or image. The denoted message is, for Barthes, "utopian" in that it exists only in an ideal sense. It is both "evictive" (i.e., "what is left in the image when the signs of connotation are mentally deleted") and "sufficient" (i.e., "it has at least one meaning"—that is, one recognizes it as *some* thing). It is received precisely regardless of culture, and thus is "perceptual," "literal," and "non-coded." And, "cleared utopianically of its connotations, [it] become[s] radically objective, or, in the last analysis, innocent" (p. 42). The connoted message, conversely, is exceedingly "cultural," "non-literal," and "coded." It offers the possibility of multiplicity and variation in readings, each depending "on the different kinds of knowledge—practical, national, cultural, aesthetic—invested in the image" (p. 46) *and* residing in any given individual image sender or receiver. Thus:

> The image is penetrated through and through by the system of meaning, in exactly the same way as man [*sic*] is articulated to the very depths of his being in distinct languages. The language of the image is not merely the totality of utterances emitted…, it is also the totality of utterances received…." (p. 47)

Connotation includes "typical" signifiers and "common" signifieds." This set of signifiers (or "connotators") constitutes a "rhetoric of the image," which, in turn, signifies an *ideology*—one

"which cannot but be single for a given society and history [rather like Foucault's *episteme*], no matter what signifiers of connotation it may use" (p. 49).

What Barthes makes possible is a specific and critical analysis of the image—in this case, the pedagogical image—grounded in its linguistic and iconic messages, both literal and symbolic, both denoted and connoted. He allows an interpretive undertaking relative to the structure of the image, and to its intended and unintended meanings, its connotator-signifier-rhetoric, and its connoted-signified-ideology.[8]

Boorstin: The Pseudo-Event

> We are haunted, not by reality, but by those images we have put in place of reality. (Boorstin, 1961/1992, p. 6)

> The making of the illusions which flood our experience has become the business of America, some its most respectable business. I am thinking not only of advertising and public relations and political rhetoric, but of all the activities which purport to inform and comfort and improve and educate and elevate us….(Boorstin, 1961/1992, p. 4)

Daniel Boorstin's prophetic words first appeared in his 1961 work *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America.* Arguing that contemporary US society had become one of "image" instead of "reality," or "pseudo-events" instead of "real" events, Boorstin (1961/1992) effectively delineated and positioned the evolving role and status of the media and information in the United States. He defined the "pseudo-event…[as] a happening that possesses the following [critical] characteristics:

> (1) It is not spontaneous, but comes about because someone has planned, planted, or incited it. Typically, it is not a train wreck or an earthquake, but an interview.
>
> (2) It is planted primarily (not always exclusively) for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced. Therefore, its occurrence is arranged for the convenience of the reporting or reproducing media. Its success is measured by how widely it is reported. Time relations in it are commonly fictitious or factitious; the announcement is given out in advance "for future release" and written as if the event had occurred in the past. The question, "Is it real?" is less important than, "Is it newsworthy?"
>
> (3) Its relation to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous. Its interest arises largely from this very ambiguity. Concerning a pseudo-event the question, "What does it mean?" has a new dimension....the interest in an interview is always, in a sense, in whether it really happened and in what might have been the motives. Did the statement really mean what it said? Without some of this ambiguity a pseudo-event cannot be very interesting. [and]
>
> (4) Usually it is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. (pp. 11-12)

In *The Image* Boorstin first justifies his understanding by establishing the underlying affiliation between the predominance of the pseudo-event and the development among Americans of certain "extravagant expectations." As he states: "We demand anything and everything. We expect the contradictory and the impossible. We expect compact cars which are spacious; luxurious cars which are economical....We expect to be...made literate by illiterate appeals for literacy" (p. 4). In fact, he continues, "[w]e are ruled by extravagant expectations":

> (1) *Of what the world holds.* Of how much news there is, how many heroes there are, how often masterpieces are made, how exotic the nearby can be, how familiar the exotic can become. Of the closeness of places and the farness of places. [and]
>
> (2) *Of our power to shape the world.* Of our ability to create events when there are none, to make heroes when they don't exist, to be somewhere else when we haven't left home. Of our ability to make art forms suit our convenience, to transform a novel into a movie and vice versa, to turn a symphony into mood-conditioning. To fabricate national purposes when we lack them, to pursue these purposes after we have fabricated them. To invent our standards and then to respect them as if they had been revealed or discovered. (pp. 4-5)

He next situates the pseudo-event within what he terms the "Graphic Revolution," when, beginning in the 19th century with the perfection of the telegraph, the human "ability to make, preserve, transmit, and disseminate precise images—images of print, of men and landscapes and events, and the voices of men and mobs—now grew at a fantastic pace" (p. 13). This revolution included such inventions as photography, the telephone, the phonograph, radio, motion pictures, television, and, more recently, the personal computer and the Internet.

Although historical in origin, the speed and force with which the pseudo-event has evolved, and continues to evolve and to dominate, have created a state of affairs in which pseudo-events now in fact "overshadow [more] spontaneous events…" (p. 39). This is because:

> (1) Pseudo-events are more dramatic [in that they] can be planned to be more suspenseful….

(2) Pseudo-events, being planned for dissemination, are easier to disseminate and to make vivid. Participants are selected for their newsworthy and dramatic interest.

(3) Pseudo-events can be repeated at will, and thus their impression can be re-enforced.

(4) Pseudo-events cost money to create; hence somebody has an interest in disseminating, magnifying, advertising, and extolling them as events worth watching or worth believing. They are therefore advertised in advance, and rerun in order to get [someone's] money's worth.

(5) Pseudo-events, being planned for intelligibility, are more intelligible and hence more reassuring....

(6) Pseudo-events are more sociable, more conversable, and more convenient to witness. Their occurrence is planned for our convenience....

(7) Knowledge of pseudo-events—of what has been reported, or what has been staged, and how—becomes the test of being "informed."... [and]

(8) Finally, pseudo-events spawn other pseudo-events in geometric progression. They dominate our consciousness simply because there are more of them, and ever more. (pp. 39-40)

Although Boorstin addressed most directly the cultures of politics and celebrity, his case holds unmistakable relevance for the study of pedagogical images. Do such images, in fact, meet the characteristics of pseudo-events (i.e., consider films portrayals and media-reported test scores)? Are they unspontaneous, planted, ambiguous, and self-fulfilling? Do they at all relate to irrational and "extravagant" expectations—for example, the view that ("of course") the US will "lead" the rest of the world in everything? And, lastly, to what extent—if at all—do they

inhibit the spontaneous event, effectively privileging image over authenticity and/or the illusion over the experiential?

McLuhan: The Medium is the Message

> In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology. (McLuhan, 1964/1994, p. 7)

Marshall McLuhan's (1964/1994) *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* is notable for a number of reasons, including, arguably, its groundbreaking role in the creation of contemporary media studies as a legitimate academic discourse. Although McLuhan is best known today for phrases such as "the medium is the message," "generation gap," and "global village," his work remains a complex and insightful mechanism for the investigation of images—pedagogical and otherwise—most importantly those made possible by technological change and innovation.

For this paper, I limit my focus to McLuhan's statement that "the medium is the message," and consider as well the probability that, somewhat commutatively, "the message is the medium." In deriving his thesis, McLuhan first redefined "medium" away from its common usage as transmitter of information (e.g., the press, newspapers, TV, films, etc.), and suggested instead that a "medium [is] an[y] extension of ourselves" (p. 7), "our human senses" (p. 21).

Further, he redefined "message," opposing the more traditional notion of "information" or "contents" with his view that "the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" or "the psychic and social consequences of the designs or patterns [of some medium] as they amplify or accelerate existing processes" (p. 8). But since "it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action" (p. 9), the medium then is the message. Further, because the content of any medium is always another medium (e.g., as the content of a film is a novel or story or opera or nonfiction narrative, and so on), in fact, then, the message is the medium as well.

What McLuhan argues is that the "message" of a "medium" exists irrespective of the specific informational nature of its "contents." Media/messages create their social and psychological contents no matter the specificity of denoted data. The message of the medium of television, for example, depended not on the contents of its images, or on how it was used, but was in actuality contained in the medium itself. As a medium, an extension of ourselves, an extension of our eyes and ears, television's message, "the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduce[d] into human affairs" or "the psychic and social consequences of [its] designs or patterns…as they amplif[ied] or accelerate[d] existing processes" (p. 8), was structural to television itself—*was* television itself—in how it "shape[d] and control[led] the scale and form of human association and action" (p. 9). In the end, *particular* contents and uses were less important to meaning than were the medium itself and its psychological, social, technological, and cultural outcomes.

The idea that the medium is the message (and that the message is the medium) enables a unique approach to investigating pedagogical images. It asks that scholars re-aim their focus, and that the point of inquiry shift from the contents (the dialogue or picture of a film or the test

scores themselves—and what these might mean) to the media (film, comics, TV news, newspaper headlines, soundbites) as extensions of the human senses (ears, eyes, and so forth) and to their consequences writ socially and psychologically and culturally (i.e., via their impact on human association and their ability to "eliminate time and space factors in human association" [McLuhan, 1964/1994, p. 9]).

Summary

Although necessarily brief (and inevitably overly simplified), each of these frameworks offers scholars a unique perspective from within which to pursue the creation, proliferation, and consequences of pedagogical images. (Of course, these frameworks do not all apply equally well to all images. Thus, for instance, Boorstin's pseudo-event is perhaps more useful with respect to newspapers than to cartoons.) In the next section I apply these orientations to three examples taken from the respective domains of political cartooning, popular film, and journalism.

Examples and Applications

From among the countless number of publicly available images of education—of teaching, learning, teachers, students, school violence, reform, achievement, and so on—it is perhaps impossible to select any one or any set that stands out as somehow "typical" or "representative" or "generalizable." Foundationalist or universalist criteria such as "better" or "worse" collapse against the likelihood that here such contingent qualities rest firmly in the eyes of the beholder. My purpose in choosing the following images is simply to demonstrate—heuristically, paradigmatically—the potential utility of drawing on the included theories/theorists for at least some meaningful understanding of pedagogical images.

Image 1: Teaching to the Test

Figure 1, an editorial cartoon from the March 2001 issue of *Z Magazine*, shows a woman (teacher) and a child (student) both wrapped-up mummy-like in massive pieces of paper labeled "TESTS" and meeting a generic (male) school administrator (also holding a sheet of paper) outside a door marked "School District." According to the caption, the teacher is saying to the district official: "Teaching to [the] test is constraining teaching and learning." On the surface, a relatively clear and concrete statement. Yet Bakhtin, Barthes, and McLuhan, in this example, each offers insights that go beyond the merely descriptive.

Drawing on Bakhtin's chronotope, a number of time-space relationships emerge, each saying something relevant to the contemporary issue of standardized testing. With respect to time, note first that no clear era or chronology emanates from the cartoon—it is difficult, that is, to tell clearly whether the setting is today or the 1950s, 60s, 70s, 80s, or so forth. The characters are "generic," and could be indicative of a number of distinctive periods of time. Second, we know little from the image about more *micro*-settings of time—early morning, late afternoon, or sometime else. Our best efforts at "knowing" are subjective, speculative, and interpretive.

Here space, although it is specific and does matter, also seems somewhat timeless. The location could be outside any district administrator's office at anytime. What is offered is a slow and long-term school time-space chronotope in which time repeats cyclically and space remains remarkably consistent yet particular and necessary. This chronotope does, though, contextualize the reader/viewer's engagement with reality such that we can see ourselves in various roles within this specific intersection of space and time (e.g., in the past or present or future in some

Figure 1: Pedagogical Image—Cartoon[9]

"Teaching to test is constraining teaching and learning."

Reprinted from: *Z Magazine*, March 2001, p. 35.

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school as a student, teacher, or administrator). Regardless of our age and present position we (can) recognize and understand the setting—frequently in similar ways. As a context for action, the image makes clear the dominance of the school space-time chronotope, and suggests the entrenched difficulties which face any coordinated effort to challenge standardized testing. Time is dynamic, and can move back and forth; space is not replaceable but is necessary and consistent. The characters are understandable—regardless of our unique understandings of the relationships between space and time—and nearly universally distinguishable. Standardized testing constrains teaching and learning and has for a long time. District officials don't want to hear this and haven't for a long time (even if they know it's true). For teachers are teachers and students are students and administrators are administrators and schools are schools and standardized tests are standardized tests period. Voicing concerns does little good, for the powers that be may ignore the interests of teachers and students at little risk other than perhaps a proverbial headache. Significant change requires facing head-on the seemingly overwhelming forces of time and space.

From Barthes, it is clear that any image has both a linguistic and a symbolic message. The linguistic message here—the caption—is, simply, that "Teaching to [the] test is constraining teaching and learning."[10] (Note also that the label "test" anchors the meaning of the enveloping sheets of paper.) The anchorage function of this message is to indicate to readers/viewers that the image refers to a teacher-student situation as opposed to, say, a parent-child one in which a parent is challenging a child's score (which might be a possible reading of the image were it not for the caption or text). The message anchors interpretation within school, and helps to identify the woman and child as a teacher and student. As relay, the caption functions in part to tell the story. It allows the audience to read the image as: *A teacher and student confront a school*

district administrator to express their concern that testing and the demand to "teach to the test" inhibits or impedes a more meaningful teaching and learning.

The symbolic or iconic message is both denoted and connoted. The denoted message is, according to Barthes, "utopian" in its structure as "radically objective" and literal. Fundamentally, a woman and child face a school district official to object to teaching to a test—that is, as it were, just what the picture shows. The connoted message is cultural and coded and interpretive—even ideological—and suggests a multiplicity of possible meanings depending on the different knowledges held by different audiences. In my reading, the image "means" that teachers and students are being forced by uncaring bureaucrats to teach to a test instead of engaging one another in authentic pedagogy. The pictured administrator—whose office is distant from the school—cares little, as evidenced by his facial expression, about the plight of teachers and children but a great deal about procedure, test scores, and directives. My unique reading builds on my unique (and personal as well as more formal) knowledge of such relationships as they exist within asymmetrical settings of power, and as they are grounded in such characteristics as gender, age, and prestige/status/position. I sympathize with the frustrations of the teacher and admire her commitment and willingness to risk confronting a rather imposing figure of power.

McLuhan's work asks first that the cartoon form be taken as a medium, and implies that what is most important is not what it says *per se* (i.e., its contents), but rather how it works. Editorial/political cartooning serves, as do all media, as an extension of human beings. Like other visual media, the cartoon provides an extension of our eyes and allows people to see into places where they are not directly situated (e.g., schools). Moreover, though, it serves as an extension of our feet, so that we can in fact *be* in places where we are not directly situated. Its

social and psychological consequences—its message—depend initially on the understanding that it includes within itself other media (such as schools or schooling or education) and that it works with newer forms of technology (e.g., the Internet) to engage people in some level of conversation and contact that differs from that made possible by other media. Simply put, the political cartoon—including the example pictured in Figure 1—potentially brings relatively large numbers of people into discussions that they would not otherwise have add. Cartoons are easy to reproduce and distribute. They encourage an expanded dialogue that transcends the normally verbally-oriented policy-minded folks who read newspapers and news-driven magazines and journals. They bring people into debates and engage them with issues, ideas, and alternatives that affect their understandings of and interest in the conditions of their everyday lives. In some cases, such cartoons may provide individuals a point of entry into public policy debates (e.g., over schooling and the significance of high-stakes standardized testing).

Image 2: Headlines

Boorstin's notion of pseudo-event applies well to the news headlines offered in Figure 2. Consider here first how these headlines relate contextually to his "extravagant expectations." On one level, they represent the Garrison Keillor-derived "Lake Wobegon Effect"—where "all the children are above average." This is an expectation "of what the world holds." Its global corollary, that American schools and children are (or at least should be) "better" than those of the rest of the world sets up an interesting national-international contradiction. Within the US the expectation is that on average every child will (or can) score *higher* than average on standardized-tests, yet that children in other countries should not be able to do as well. A related expectation "of our power to shape the world" frames the assumption that by expanding the use of tests, and by raising their stakes, "we" can *make* all children score above some average. This

Figure 2: Pedagogical Images—Newspaper Headlines[11]

Bush Campaign Proposals on Education

—*Education Week*, January 10, 2001

Bush Promises Swift Action on Education

—Erik W. Robelen, *Education Week*, January 10, 2001

"No Child Left Behind"

—*Education Week*, January 31, 2001

Democrats, GOP Agree in Principle on Federal Role

—Erik W. Robelen, *Education Week*, January 31, 2001

Few States are Now In Line With Bush Testing Plan

—Lynn Olsen, *Education Week*, January 31, 2001

State warns of massive test failures: Schools told to prepare

—Terrence Stutz, *The Dallas Morning News*, March 23, 2001

expectation, apparently, rests on the idea that tests make the school and that testing equals success. Yet, oddly, the conflation by the President (the focus of these headlines) of testing with both school success and leaving no child behind ensures (a) that he will be perceived as committed to "improving" public schooling, (b) that blame for "low" achievement will increasingly fall on the shoulders of teachers, students, and underresourced school districts (especially those that are less wealthy and whose students are predominantly African American, Hispanic, and Latino/a), and (c) that some if not many children *will* be left behind, as is the case in Bush's own home state of Texas (e.g., McNeil, 2000). (Although my point here is not criticism of Bush's education policy per se, I have a number of significant problems with it, including its implied privileging of dominant cultural norms and their connections to state-sponsored corporate capitalism [see Vinson & Ross, 2001 March].)

On one hand, the story told by the headlines listed in Figure 2 is straightforward and positive. As a Presidential candidate, Bush ran on an education platform promising certain "reforms" organized around "accountability," "school choice/vouchers," "teacher quality," "early-childhood education," "reading," and "after-school aid" ("Bush Campaign Proposals on Education," 2001). After the election, he promised "swift action" on implementing his proposals—theoretically, what the electorate would hope for from a newly sworn-in President (Robelen, 2001 January 10). Early in his term, he sent his education package, "No Child Left Behind," to Congress, where it drew immediate and bipartisan support ("No Child Left Behind," 2001; Robelen, 2001 January 31; see Vinson & Ross, 2001 March, for a more critical look at this "bipartisanship"). Seeing such widespread Congressional agreement, states began exploring their own systems of accountability, standards, and testing in an effort to prepare for, and take advantage of, the President's plan (Olson, 2001). But, problems surfaced, even in Texas which

serves as the model for Bush's national plan, as the Texas Education Agency warned local school districts that under current practices they should prepare for "massive [at least three out of five students] test failures" (Stutz, 2001). As reported by the *Dallas Morning News*, "The warning comes as local school officials prepare for a host of changes coming to Texas schools in the next few years, including former Gov. George W. Bush's program to curb automatic student promotions. President Bush is now pitching some of the same Texas school accountability initiatives to the nation" (Stutz, 2001). In sum, what began as "swift action," "no child left behind," and bipartisan Congressional agreement, moved quickly to "some children left behind" or even, potentially, "more if not most children left behind" (see, again, McNeil, 2000, for a critical look at the Texas testing system, or TAAS; see also Haney, 2000).

But does the Bush plan, as presented in the press, work in actuality as a pseudo-event? Against Boorstin's (1961/1992) criteria, clearly the plan was not "spontaneous." It was, that is, "planned, planted, [and] incited" (p. 11). Its purpose was large scale and positive news coverage, repeated reproduction, and (perhaps) confusion. The media (and the voting public) had been prepared throughout the campaign by Bush's slogan, "No child left behind," as it appeared in debates, speeches, and TV broadcasts. Its importance was not its "reality," but its "newsworthiness" as Bush and his "team" went out of their way to flood the media with their concern for education—a top policy priority—and to transmit the "appearance" of the candidate as a man concerned about schools. His "image" rested on the so-called "Texas Miracle," the authenticity of which mattered far less than did the image of an educational turnaround. So important—newsworthy—was this image that the President almost immediately appointed Houston schools Superintendent Rod Paige as national Secretary of Education. The "nature" of the Texas Miracle and the "meaning" of "no child left behind" was ambiguous at best, especially

in light of thinktank and scholarly reports critical of Texas students' achievement (e.g., Haney, 2000; Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey, & Stecher, 2000; McNeil, 2000) and in view of factors such as the graduation rate of Texas high school students, among the lowest in the nation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). As a self-fulfilling prophecy, without doubt the Bush Administration will at some future point claim that no children were left behind and then solicit and assert credit for the success of public schools.

Interestingly (and sadly), the foundation—the Texas Miracle—for the President's plan itself is a "myth," as Haney (2000) so effectively demonstrates. The pseudo-event that might make Bush's reputation as the new "education president" *should* collapse given its internal paradoxes and questionable assertions. Should, but it won't. An image based on a myth, with children the ultimate victims. That it'll serve the President is clear. As Boorstin argues, pseudo-events will these days beat more spontaneous events. They can be made more dramatic, newsworthy, simple, convenient, and intelligible than can the complexities of experiential life (remembering as well that it is in someone's financial and political interests that pseudo-events do overshadow the spontaneous).

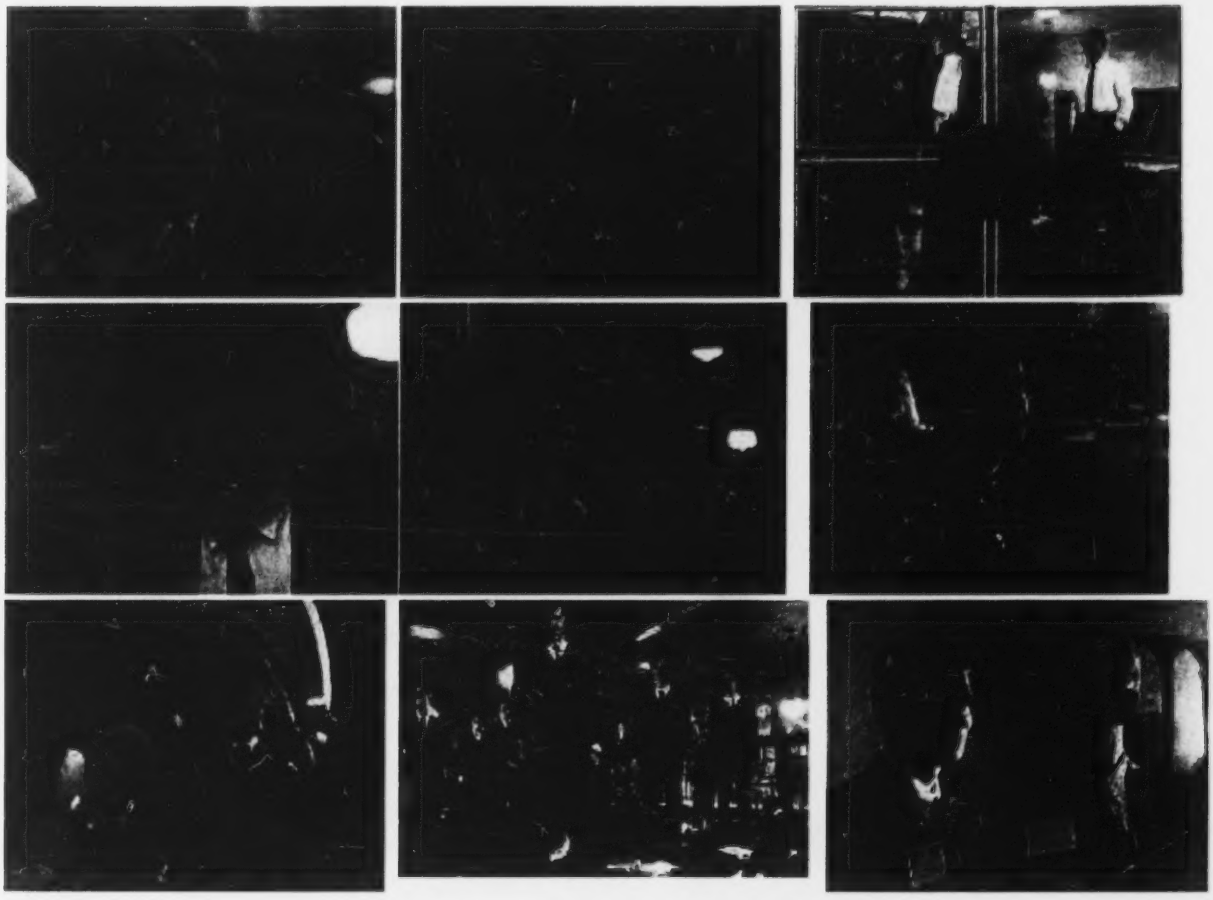
Image 3: Dead Poets' Society

Figure 3 includes both movie stills and a quotation from the film *Dead Poets' Society* (Weir, 1989). As with the testing cartoon depicted in Figure 1, the perspectives of Bakhtin, Barthes, and McLuhan can help illuminate and elucidate the many meanings of these particular pedagogical images.

In some ways, the same school chronotope inherent in Figure 1 emerges here. Both the pictorial and textual images suggest a certain timelessness—chronologically and geographically as well as with respect to the image of the person. On the surface, the movie stills provide no

Figure 3: Pedagogical Images—Film[12]

Dead Poets Society



Quote/Soundbite:

John Keating: Now I'd like you to step forward over here. They're not that different from you, are they? Same haircuts. Full of hormones, just like you. Invincible, just like you feel. The world is their oyster. They believe they're destined for great things, just like many of you, their eyes are full of hope, just like you. Did they wait until it was too late to make from their lives even one iota of what they were capable? Because, you see gentlemen, these boys are now fertilizing daffodils. But if you listen real close, you can hear them whisper their legacy to you. Go on, lean in. Listen, you hear it? —Carpe —hear it? —Carpe, carpe diem, seize the day boys, make your lives extraordinary.

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clear evidence of a specific time period—the 1950s? the 1980s?—although from the cinematic narrative the film is set in 1959. (This itself is problematic, as has been suggested by Carton [1989] and even popular *Chicago Sun-Times* film critic Roger Ebert [1989]. If the year didn't matter, then why choose 1959? For one thing it "allowed" the film to project certain unfortunate attitudes about race and gender—"that's just the way things were back then." For another, it enabled director Weir to avoid confronting what many audience members would perceive as more turbulent periods in US history, for example the 1960s.)

Although space in *Dead Poets' Society* is important—segregated, elite, exclusive—the specific locale, Vermont's Welton Academy, is less significant than is the category or class of geographical place that it symbolizes (the private, expensive, elite, college prep boarding school). As was the case for the cartoon in Figure 1, space is timeless. Time is slow, long-term, and ultimately reversible. Space is symbolic and generic. Individuals come and go (and come back again, student-to-teacher, a la student-then-teacher John Keating), but *roles* (or *characters*) remain the same. Mr. Keating (played by Robin Williams) stresses this point as his students examine photographs of past Welton students: "They're not that different from you, are they? Same haircuts. Full of hormones, just like you. Invincible, just like you feel. The world is they oyster. They believe they're destined for great things, just like many of you, their eyes are full of hope, just like you…" (from Caldwell & Caldwell, 2000). As evidenced by both Figures 1 and 3, that, in essence, is *school space-time*, the *school chronotope*.

As McLuhan indicates, the film medium itself—as an extension of the human, of eyes, ears, and feet—provides viewers the capacity to see, hear, and move into positions separated from their own actualized localizations. Its message, first, is story or narrative—in *Dead Poets' Society historical fiction* or *fictionalized history*—another medium. More importantly, though,

the message is that—apart from its contents—it alters irrevocably the contexts and practices of human interaction—socially, psychologically, and technologically distancing individuals one from another while simultaneously reconnecting them through a common and contrived and imagined sensory experience. Where and when don't matter—countless theaters, videotapes, DVDs, showtimes (etc.)—either in human association or *Dead Poets' Society* itself. As time and space collapse in the medium, they do so as well in the human. Thus, the medium here indeed *is* the message, and the message indeed *is* the medium.

Meaning and Pedagogical Image

By applying the frameworks of Bakhtin, Barthes, McLuhan, and Boorstin to the exemplar images, several themes emerge. Although key questions remain and deserve further study, at the very least certain insights relative to the "school chronotope," the "meaning" of pedagogical images beyond the merely denotative (although, of course, denotation is important), the relationships between "medium" and "message" (especially vis-à-vis critical psychological, social, and technological consequences) and the potential domination of the "spontaneous" and "authentic" experiences of schooling by the "pseudo-event" (may) become increasingly clearer, especially with respect to the creation, maintenance, proliferation, and effects of pedagogical images.

Conclusions

If nothing else, hopefully this paper has at least hinted at the possible utility of the several included frameworks for studying pedagogical images—especially within this age of the media-conglomerate (e.g., AOL Time-Warner) and of "hyperreality" (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997). If so, then perhaps the first key point stems from the probability that the underlying meanings of all pedagogical images transcend the merely ideological and denoted (although the denoted is,

obviously, significant). In fact, if successful, then the viewpoints of Bakhtin, Barthes, McLuhan, and Boorstin each suggests critical insights.

From Bakhtin (1981) consider the potentiality of a dominant/dominating school chronotope, much like, perhaps, the other chronotopes he himself identified and described in "classical" literature (e.g., the "ancient novel of everyday life," "the biographical novel," etc.). And from Barthes, via the "rhetoric of the image," consider the importance of both the "linguistic"/"textual" and "iconic"/"symbolic" messages—in isolation and in combination—as both indicate, among other characteristics, some level of denoted as well as connoted meaning. McLuhan, of course, provides a media-based understanding, and suggests famously that "the medium is the message," and, by extension, that "the message is the medium." Moreover, he delineates the significance of images as they stretch beyond simply their informational contents—or, colloquially, what they're about—and toward their context-grounded set of psychological, social, cultural, and technological consequences, especially as they exist within any given medium itself. And, lastly, Boorstin, with his exegesis of the "pseudo-event," offers a plausible mechanism for, or one set of interpretations of, what might be the fundamental condition regarding representation today—Why, and to what extent, do individuals and societies prefer the unreal—the imaginary, the image, the pseudo-event—to the real—the experiential, the experience, the spontaneous—or the inauthentic, so to speak, to the authentic? In whose interest is this state of affairs? How is it maintained, and what, ultimately, are its effects?

Yet even granting the possible utility of these dynamic and divergent works, still, and without question, a great deal of further and related scholarship remains. Overall, and at the risk of oversimplification, this work might focus various and interconnected areas such as: (1) The degree to which other theoretical frameworks might shed light on the kinds of questions raised in

this paper relative to schooling and the pedagogical image; (2) The application of various frameworks—including but not limited to those of Bakhtin, Barthes, McLuhan, and Boorstin—to images beyond those concentrated upon here (e.g., TV, other films, textbooks, photographs, scholarly articles, etc.); and (3) Empirical (both quantitative and qualitative) investigations into the production, maintenance, reproduction, interpretation, manipulation, and consequences of pedagogical images. Such inquiry could include an examination of the importance of multiple production-distribution-consumption contexts as well as some exploration of the further usefulness of disciplines such as film, media, and cultural studies. (For instance, in what ways are certain images of teachers dominant, and to what effect? How and to what ends are teachers presented as "redeemers," "saviors," "rebels," and as those who by necessity must "sacrifice" in the name of their "calling," their "mission" [see here Mr. Keating in *Dead Poets' Society*, Mr. Holland in *Mr. Holland's Opus*, Mr. Chipping in *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, Ms. Johnson in *Dangerous Minds*]? How are gender, class, racial, ethnic, linguistic, sexual, political/ideological, and power-based stereotypes played out [see Ms. Brodie in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Mr. Dadier in *Blackboard Jungle*, Ms. Johnson in *Dangerous Minds*, Mr. Escalante in *Stand and Deliver*]?) In the end, scholars of the pedagogical image must take seriously a number of crucial and fundamental questions: What do pedagogical images mean to the creators and to the array of audiences who eventually read and/or view and/or proliferate them? How and why do they acquire, convey, or suggest such meanings? Why do pedagogical images mean what they mean? What are their (potential) consequences and why? And what are the implications of various pedagogical images for educational purpose, school policy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment? More consistent with the interplay of axes suggested above, what are their and their creators' *intentions*, how do they treat the issue of *accuracy*, and what *understandings* are

implied by or displayed in the image (on the part of its makers and in terms of their expectations of the image's anticipated audiences)?

No matter what, since the promulgation of such images continues, at the very least they must somehow be appropriately confronted. For trends such as those connected to the Internet and to globalization, SBER, the expansion of media and media outlets, and the growing significance of education as a public policy issue, all for better or worse, show no signs of slowing down.

In the end we all seek the authentic yet face and often accept the imaginary. Still, the pursuit must continue. For, ultimately, and although complex, meaning indeed does matter. Representations persist, societies evolve, and past, present, and future intertwine and mingle with(in) unstable places. Seeing and being seen, the merging of spectacle and surveillance, and the absurd and extreme possibility of everybody watching everybody all the time—what sense to make of these? In many ways, I contend, the question of pedagogical image has never been more important. Nor has the question of authenticity.

Notes

[1] A version of this paper was originally presented as a Poster Session at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, 2001 (Culture, Media, and Curriculum SIG).

[2] The *Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, the *Merriam Webster Thesaurus*, and *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* were each accessed via an America Online "Keyword" search of "dictionary." Note also that I refer throughout this work to "image" as a noun.

[3] In no way should any of these comments be taken as support for the Bush education program. In fact, I disagree with most of it, especially the effort to expand standardized testing. Nonetheless, there is at least some indication that both Democrats and Republicans in Washington, national corporate leaders, and others do agree with the President, not only on the importance of education as a policy issue, but also on the means by which to approach it (e.g., Vinson, 1999; Vinson & Ross, in press).

[4] The poll was based on telephone interviews with 1018 randomly selected adults. It asked about "14 items to which the Bush presidency could turn its attention…" (Jones, 2001). A related poll from October, 2000 concerning election year issues concluded that:

> The public ranks education as one of the most important issues in this year's presidential campaign, with 91% saying it is "very" or "extremely" important. The educational issue may be based on perceptions of problems as much as it is on reality. Parents of school-aged children are quite satisfied with the quality of education their children receive, but much less so with the educational system in general in the country. Similarly, Americans

> give higher grades to the schools in their local community than they do to schools nationally. (Gallup, 2000)

[5] Foucault's (e.g., 1975/1979) work on "surveillance" and Debord's (e.g., 1967/1995) take on "spectacle" make a certain amount of sense as well. I have elected to exclude them principally because of space limitations and because I have to some extent addressed them in previous work (e.g., Vinson, 2001; Vinson & Ross, 2001). Other potentially useful concepts, such as Baudrillard's (e.g., 1995) "simulacrum," were excluded as well for reasons of space.

[6] Bakhtin wrote here most directly about chronotope and the *novel*, although he discussed other artistic forms as well. His concept, if not necessarily his description of specific novelistic chronotopes, applies, I think, equally well to film and other contemporary media representations. I wish also to note that although it is too narrow for the present work, some readers might find interesting Bakhtin's idiosyncratic treatment of the image and "idea" in the work of Dostoevsky (see Bakhtin, 1984, chapter 3).

[7] Their list of questions is, to say the least, extensive, and too long to include in its entirety. I will, however, quote individual questions specifically from the text when appropriate and necessary.

[8] Some readers may find it interesting to compare Bakhtin's chronotope with "space-time" as approached by Barthes (1977, esp. pp. 44-46).

[9] The cartoon is from bülbül (2001). In the interest of full disclosure, note that it accompanied an article on which I was co-author (Vinson & Ross, 2001 March).

[10] The linguistic or textual message could also be extended to include the accompanying article (Vinson & Ross, 2001 March).

[11] The references for the headlines are, respectively: Bush Campaign Proposals on Education (2001); Robelen (2001, January 10); No Child Left Behind (2001); Robelen (2001, January 31); Olsen (2001); and Stutz (2001).

[12] The movie stills and quote come from Caldwell and Caldwell (2000).

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